

In a development letter dated December 15, 2020 in the instant claim, OWCP File No. xxxxxx436, OWCP informed appellant of the deficiencies of his claim. It advised him regarding

the type of medical evidence necessary to establish his claim and provided 30 days for him to submit the requested evidence.

In response, appellant submitted a medical report dated September 10, 2020 from Dr. Ryan Beekman, a Board-certified orthopedic and hand surgeon. Dr. Beekman diagnosed tendinosis and tenosynovitis involving the extensor carpi ulnaris without tendon tear, minimal tenosynovitis of the extensor carpi radialis longus and brevis tendons. In reports dated September 24 and November 5, 2020, he diagnosed bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and also cubital tunnel syndrome.

In a report dated November 30, 2020, Amy Herrick, a nurse practitioner, related that appellant was seen for a follow-up appointment for his bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and that he was scheduled for a right carpal tunnel release.

In a letter dated January 8, 2021, Dr. Beekman related that appellant underwent bilateral right and left carpal tunnel release on January 5, 2021. He noted that appellant had indicated that his hand symptoms of numbness and tingling were significantly exacerbated by his work activities including lifting heavy objects and repetitive heavy gripping. Dr. Beekman concluded that it was reasonable to believe that appellant's bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and left cubital tunnel syndrome were causally related to his employment.

By decision dated February 4, 2021, OWCP denied appellant's claim as causal relationship was not established between the diagnosed medical conditions and the accepted employment factors. It concluded, therefore, that the requirements had not been met to establish an injury or medical condition causally related to the accepted employment factors.

In a letter dated March 2, 2021, Dr. Beekman related that appellant had reported that his symptoms were significantly exacerbated by his work activities of lifting heavy objects and gripping. He also stated that medical literature supported that repetitive heavy gripping was a known cause of carpal tunnel and that he believed that appellant's work duties caused his bilateral carpal and left cubital tunnel syndrome.

On March 11, 2021 appellant requested reconsideration of OWCP's February 4, 2021 decision.

By decision dated April 28, 2021, OWCP denied modification of its February 4, 2021 decision.

The Board has duly considered the matter and concludes that this case is not in posture for decision. OWCP's procedures provide that cases should be administratively combined when correct adjudication of the issues depend on frequent cross-referencing between the files.¹ For example, if a new injury case is reported for an employee who previously filed an injury claim for

¹ See Federal (FECA) Procedure Manual, Part 2 -- Claims, *File Maintenance and Management*, Chapter 2.400.8(c) (February 2000).

a similar condition or the same part of the body, doubling is required.² Herein, appellant filed a claim for carpal tunnel syndrome, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx310 on November 5, 2020, and subsequently filed an occupational disease claim on December 9, 2020 for cubital and carpal tunnel syndrome, assigned OWCP File No. xxxxxx436. The evidence pertaining to OWCP File No. xxxxxx310, however, is not part of the case record presently before the Board.

For a full and fair adjudication, the case must be returned to OWCP to administratively combine the current case record with OWCP File No. xxxxxx310. Following this and such further development as OWCP deems necessary, it shall issue a *de novo* decision. Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the April 28, 2021 decision of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs is set aside and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this order of the Board.

Issued: March 18, 2022
Washington, DC

Alec J. Koromilas, Chief Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Janice B. Askin, Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

Valerie D. Evans-Harrell, Alternate Judge
Employees' Compensation Appeals Board

² *Id.*; *D.C.*, Docket No. 19-0100 (issued June 3, 2019); *N.M.*, Docket No. 18-0833 (issued April 18, 2019); *K.T.*, Docket No. 17-0432 (issued August 17, 2018).